

Weaning food: Importance and recipes

Minaxi R. Prajapati¹ and K. B. Kamaliya²

1. Assistant Professor (FN), Polytechnic in Food Science & HE, AAU, Anand

2. Associate Professor, Polytechnic in Food Science & HE, AAU, Anand

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Human life began at conception and ends in death. This entire period is called life and it is divided into various phases. In the beginning, the period of development starts and up to adulthood, all necessary developments occur. During adulthood, the body does not go under significant development. If we look at the nutritional needs of a particular developmental phase, it is different from one another.

During pregnancy, the fetus receives all necessary nutrients from the mother. So during this period, the care of the mother is of great concern because the fetus's health and development are completely dependent on the mother. After birth, the first year of life which is known as infancy is the time of most rapid growth. Healthy infant doubles their birth weight by six months. Similarly, height also increases by 20 to 25 cm. At the time of birth, a mother's milk is adequate to fulfill the nutritional need of an infant. Therefore, from birth to six months exclusive breastfeeding is recommended. Later requirements of all nutrients progressively increase as an infant grows. On the other hand, breast milk production comes down. Due to these dual factors, weaning food must be introduced after six months. Weaning food is also known as supplementary or weaning foods. Weaning food is very much important for the overall growth and development of an infant.

In western countries, specially formulated foods are widely popular which can meet the daily need of the infant. But, in the case of India, it has been observed that infants do not serve special foods. Generally, food which is prepared for other members, the same food is served to an infant by altering the consistency of food. These foods do not serve the purpose of development and growth and therefore, the cases of malnutrition get increased. Parents must understand the importance of weaning food which supports the growth and development of their infants. There is no need to buy expensive formulated baby foods from the market, one can prepare it at home without much effort. In the beginning consistency of weaning food

should be liquid like clear soups and later as infants get comfortable, the consistency of food can be altered from liquid to semi solid and solid.

Points to keep in mind while preparing supplementary/ complementary food

Low cost weaning food can easily be prepared at home from commonly used ingredients such as cereals, pulses, nuts, oilseeds and oil, sugar, jaggery, etc. Homemade complementary foods are easily digestible by infants. Weaning food prepared from the combination of cereal, pulse and jaggery provides good quality protein, adequate calories and other micronutrients such as minerals and vitamins. Infants cannot consume bulky food in sufficient quantities, so energy dense food like the inclusion of fat and sugar with green leafy vegetables add the required amount of energy, protein and micronutrients. While selecting leafy vegetables or other fiber rich vegetable quantities and proper cooking are necessary. Too much fiber rich vegetables are hard to digest and can promote bowel movements leading to loose motions in infants. Another thing is cooking, improper cooking also causes the same kind of problem. Infants should be introduced to various seasonal vegetables and fruits gradually. Vegetables and fruits should be cooked properly and mashed before feeding. After the age of one year, a child can be shifted to the normal diet which is cooked for other family members.

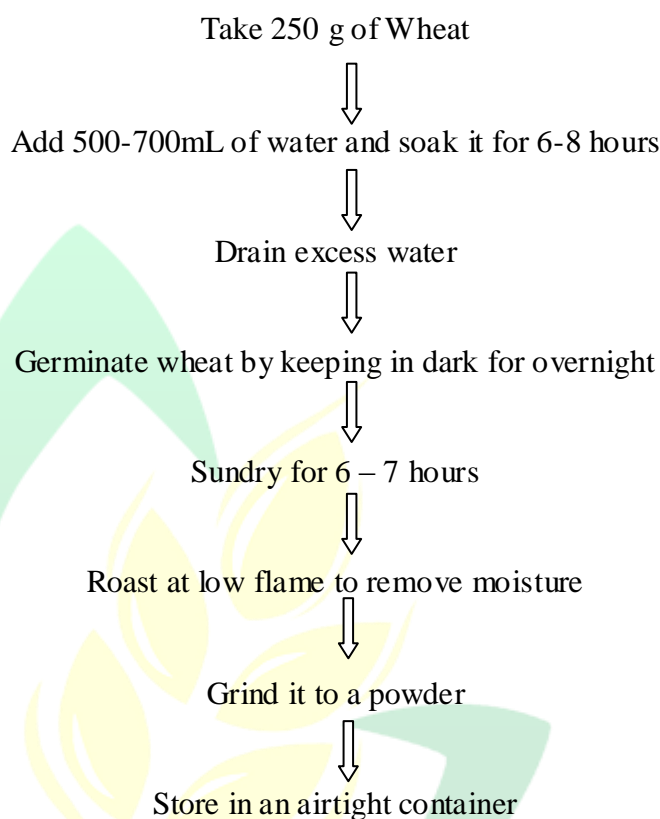
Importance of Hygiene

It is very much important to ensure good hygienic practices while preparing weaning food and feeding infants. Before preparation, the mother must wash hands with soap. Vegetables and fruits must be washed well before and cleaned before cutting. Utensils which are used for cooking and feeding must be well washed and sterilized. Proper hygiene is a key factor in maintaining good health, growth and development of the infant. Feed freshly prepared food to the infant. Never keep prepared food for a long time otherwise food will be spoiled and may cause food poisoning.

Preparation of Amylase rich foods:

This kind of food is rich in the enzyme alpha amylase and is regarded as Amylase Rich Foods (ARFs). ARFs preparation is very simple can be prepared by the mother at home (Fig-1). It helps in increasing the digestibility of cereal based food. ARFs are prepared by germinated cereals and small amounts of this type of food reduce the bulk of the cereal based diet.

Preparation of Amylase Rich Food (ARF)



(Fig-1: Preparation of amylase rich food)

Use: Take 5- 10 g of powder and add hot water to it or cook it with water for 2 to 3 minutes. One can use milk instead of adding water. Add sugar/jaggery/oil/ghee in it before feeding. Vegetable stock, salt and seasoning can also be added to ARFs. The shelf life of these homemade ARFs is around 2- 3 months if stored well in a cool dry place packed in an airtight container. It is advisable to prepare a small batch of ARFs so that it can be utilized soon and decrease the chances of spoilage.

Some of the examples of supplementary foods are given below

1. Clear Vegetable soup:

Mixed vegetable:200 gm

Method: Take 200 gm of mixed vegetables including green leafy, wash it with tap water. Cut all vegetables into large pieces and add water as per requirement. Boil



it for 15 minutes, add salt, sugar. Let the liquid cool and strain with a strainer. One can add pure desi ghee to enhance calorific value.

2. Dal soup:

Green gram dhal or mixed dhal: 20 gm

Method: Take 20 gm Green gram dhal or mixed dhal, wash it with tap water. Take it in a pan, add water as per requirement and boil it for 10-15 minutes, add salt, sugar. Let the liquid cool and strain with a strainer. One can add pure desi ghee to enhance calorific value.

3. Rice kheer

Rice: 30gm

Milk: 100 ml

Sugar: 20gm

Method: Boil rice with water till half cooked. Add milk and bring it to a boil. Add sugar and cook for a while.

4. Khichadi:

Rice: 30 gm

Green gram dhal: 10 gm

Any seasonal vegetable: 15 gm (2 t spoon)

Oil/ghee: 2 teaspoon

Method: Clean rice and dhal and cook them in water with salt till it get soft. Vegetables can be added at the time of boiling or when the cereal/pulses are 3/4th done. Add ghee to it to enhance calorific value.

5. Apple stew:

Apple: 1 No.

Water: As per requirement

Method: Take a large apple, peel and cut it into small pieces. Add a small amount of water and cook it till pieces get soft. Mash it before feeding.